

Kyodan

News Letter

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District Assembly Reflections

The last two months have been an important "season" in the life of the Kyodan: -- the season of district assemblies. While efforts toward convening continued in Osaka and Tokyo, the other 14 districts successfully concluded their meetings.

In addition to their great local importance for the respective districts, these assemblies had meaning for the whole Kyodan in that they provided the first chance for public airing of local church evaluations and criticisms of last November's 19th Kyodan General Assembly. Furthermore most of the district moderators' terms expired this year and the choice of their successors will have important consequences for the Kyodan as a whole.

Another significant point is what the assemblies revealed about local attitudes toward the Federation of Kyodan Evangelical Churches (Kyokai Rengo, cf. KNL #114) and its call to reforms based on strict adherence to the confession of faith and rejection of the so-called "radicals" and "problem posers." It is very important to see how the various districts reacted to the formation and message of this new organization within the Kyodan.

A further concern for the Kyodan as a whole is how each church and district carries on its church and missional activities in the midst of internal dissension. The whole church is deeply wounded by the conflict in Tokyo and Osaka districts. The 14 district assemblies can be regarded as a kind of test of how the Kyodan can achieve a grass-roots rebuilding of its life and mission.

Against this background of meaning the various districts assembled, some for 2 days, some for 3, during April and May.

The line-up of officers elected by the districts indicates fairly general support for the dialog approach confirmed by the 19th General Assembly. On the other hand, support for the criticisms expressed by the Kyokai Rengo is also reflected in the elections, especially in the Tokai and Chubu districts. This ambivalence was concretely felt in the atmosphere of many of the assemblies. In Ou District a statement by the moderator to the effect that, though he could not support the Kyokai Rengo

as an organization, the criticisms of members toward the present Kyodan leadership were justified, provoked spirited discussion. In Kyushu District there were statements that the political tactics of the Kyokai Rengo are a hindrance to the unity of the church, detracting from its missional power; whereas, with sufficient patience it should be possible to take up and resolve the various issues one at a time. Even some Rengo sympathizers were critical of Rengo members' advocacy of boycotting apportionment payments. Although positive support of the Rengo did not come up to expectations, the opposition to apportionment payments does encourage a mood of irresponsibility toward the Kyodan's financial needs.

The Kyodan's deepest suffering comes from the impasse in Tokyo and Osaka districts. In Tokyo the 6 sub-districts are able to carry on, but if the two districts could convene the problems posed by the Kyokai Rengo could be tackled more effectively. As both districts continue their efforts to convene it is evident that the other districts, reluctant to intervene or express opinions, are patiently standing by.

In all the districts the closing down of the Aoyama Gakuin Theological Department was discussed. This closure of a Kyodan-recognized seminary seemed to many to indicate a gap between educational ideals and the realities of educational administration. Four districts and one Tokyo sub-district issued official objections.

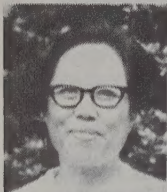
The question of how to respond to government policy that church kindergartens should register separately as educational juridical persons was taken up in several districts.

Okinawa District expressed opposition to the government's unilateral decision to extend the validity term of US and SDF base agreements from 5 to 10 years, even though the landowners have not agreed. This matter is of deep concern to the entire church if she is to take seriously the Confession of War Responsibility.

The reports from their assemblies help us to sense how the various districts are struggling to achieve and maintain solidarity in a time of confusion and conflict in the Kyodan as a whole. (reported by KISHIMOTO Yoichi)

ECUMENICAL SHARING OF ASIAN PERSONNEL

After a year's furlough Mrs. Filomena Quisol, a missionary from the Philippines, resumed work in Okinawa in a new relationship with the Kyodan. Originally she was sent by the Board of Missions of the Philippines Central Conference of the Methodist Church. She first came to Okinawa in 1953 when the church there was very poor and weak in resources and leadership in the aftermath of the Pacific War. Official ties with the Kyodan were not yet established.



Mrs. Quisol ministered in Okinawa for 20 years, contributing particularly to the training of leadership for church schools and church kindergartens, and also women's groups. Her presence in the name of Christ was especially meaningful as a token of the forgiveness and love of the Filipino people. Several of her own family members were victims of Japanese military brutality during the war. Though her service was extensive and energetic, it was all done quietly.

In 1975 it was learned that her missionary work would have to terminate in March, 1976, as a result of financial strictures in her sponsoring church in the Philippines.

It was then that the Okinawa churches, which had merged with the Kyodan in 1969 to become the Okinawa District of the Kyodan, moved by appreciation for her devotion, decided to make every effort to extend her service another four years. Members of the District Women's Committee appealed to the Central Committee of the National Federation of Kyodan Women's Societies (NFKWS) for financial contributions from women's groups in the other 15 districts. In response to this appeal the Federation set up a goal of \$6,700 to help toward the support of Mrs. Quisol for the next four years. The goal for the first year is ¥480,000.

Other support was found and commitments secured for a cooperative support plan for the four year term. The Philippine United Methodist Church will provide housing, pension, and furlough expenses. Her other living and work expenses will come from Okinawa District, the NFKWS, the CCA, JNAC, and the CoC Missionary Shared Support Fund.

The Kyodan is delighted that Mrs. Quisol was able to return to Okinawa in April, 1977, on this new basis. She attended the NFKWS Central Committee, June 13-15, and subsequently visited women's groups in several districts.

(OKUDA Michiko)

MAKINO Kazuho and his wife, Yukiko, have been serving as agricultural missionaries in India for almost ten years. Kazuho is from Yamagata Prefecture. While an agricultural student in Yamagata University he became so concerned about the hunger of the people of India that he made up his mind to serve them in the name of Christ by teaching them the skills of rice cultivation, so advanced in Japan. He has held true to that self-dedication ever since.

While teaching at Allahabad Agricultural Institute he met and married Yukiko who was already serving in India as a Christian day-nursery teacher. We give thanks to God that they could be married in India and that their eagerness to serve the Indian people is even stronger than before.

Between his 1st and 2nd terms Kazuho secured an MS degree in tropical agriculture from Tokyo Educational University and then studied for a time at the Rice Center near Manila. He was one of those who responded to the emergency in Bangladesh as assistant leader of a group of 50 work campers who took small tractors from Japan.



The Makinos will conclude their 2nd term at the Allahabad Institute in March, 1978. The Institute is inviting them for a 3rd term and they have indicated their willingness to accept. The Committee for Ecumenical Ministries hopes to return them to India in September, 1978, after a six month furlough in Japan. In a recent letter Makino wrote that he would like to dedicate his life and energy to encourage his brothers and sisters in India. For the Makinos this dedication is at the prime of their lives.

Yukiko has pioneered in developing a traveling library for the children in the village schools. With the help of Christian students, books are carried by motor-bike to village schools. A month later they are carried on to another village. Yukiko reports that in this way Christian students are learning how to serve other

-- continued on page 3 --

CCA General Assembly:

A Challenge to Japanese Christians

KISHIMOTO Kazuyo, Kyodan Delegate

Zamboanga City, Philippines
May 25, 1977

from the Philippine government to leave the country.

Dear Colleagues at the 6th Assembly:

I cannot be with you at this 6th Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia.

Countless Filipinos are not free to travel, a small reminder that countless are not free at all.

Who suffer in Asia and why? Who can know hope? How can suffering enrich and not deaden? How can hope awaken and not lull?

As these and other questions emerge at the Assembly, let not the answer come easy.

Suffering is not easily verbalized; neither is hope.

Let not consensus be cheap. People suffer because violence is willed on them.

Let the hope ring true. The wellsprings of suffering can only be the wellsprings of hope.

It is in losing our lives for His sake that we find them; it is in giving that we receive; it is in dying that we are brought to the life beyond death.

May the Lord Bless this 6th Assembly.

Jurgette A. Honculada

This message, read on the opening day to 350 delegates and other participants at the CCA Assembly in Penang, May 31 to June 9, eloquently conveys the challenge to Asia today of the assembly theme: "Jesus Christ in Asian Suffering and Hope." Ms Honculada, one of the 4 presidents elected at the last assembly 4 years ago, is a young lady in her 20s. She was unable to get permission

Although we say "Asia" in one word, its differences—racial, historical, cultural, political, economic—are very great indeed. Rather than talking about liking one another it is probably more accurate to admit that we don't even have enough in common to join hands about. In this context Asian Christians are called to witness to their hope in Christ, and to live enduring their suffering in this hope. Herein lies the common identity of the Asian churches.

The Japanese Church, especially the Kyodan in the severe situation since Expo '70, has experienced suffering, but we tend to see our problems in terms of church politics. Truly the issues we are trying to face come from within the Japanese church situation, but we need to be aware that in the background is the deep suffering and weeping of the peoples of Asia. How can our own church be reborn without giving ear and response to the cries of Asians, not by church politics, but through the cross of Jesus Christ? In the many speeches and testimonies of the CCA Assembly little mention was made of Japan's role in relation to political and economic problems. This should not reassure us. Rather we should take it as a challenge to listen and respond more seriously and sincerely to the voices of Asia. This is part of the meaning behind the election of NCCJ General Secretary NAKAJIMA Masaaki to the new CCA presidium.

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Ecumenical Sharing of Personnel (continued)

people. They are astonished at how eager the village children are to read the books. Contributions from Japan and the Japanese Christian Fellowship in Hong Kong have enabled Yukiko to purchase 400 Hindi books for this library.

The Makinos have three children. Like any missionary parents they are facing the problem of their education. Yuka (7) attends 2nd grade in the Woodstock School along with other children of missionaries in India. Chiko (4) and their son Yoshia

(2) are at home, playing in Hindi with other children around the Allahabad campus.

The Kyodan is happy and proud to join the Allahabad Institute, North American Churches, and the Christian Conference of Asia in the support of the Makino family. We see this as a fine example of the ecumenical sharing of personnel.

(by Rev. TAKAHASHI Taiji, pastor of Denenchofu Church, Tokyo, a member of the Committee for Ecumenical Ministry and Chairperson of the Makino Support Association.)

History Is Person

On June 24, 1941, long strenuous efforts toward church union came to fruition in historic Fujimicho Church, in the first General Assembly of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan). The next day a capacity crowd of 2,500 people thronged to Kyoritsu Auditorium for a public service of thanksgiving.

On May 10, 1977, 7 weeks before the Kyodan's 36th birthday, 75 admirers gathered at the Japan Christian Center in Waseda to honor Miss YOSHIOKA Harue on the occasion of her retirement.

The common factor uniting these two events is the fact that Harue is the only person whose service on the Kyodan staff goes clear back to the founding assembly. Actually her 42 year career includes 6 years with the Japan Sunday School Association before it was incorporated within the Kyodan, its building in Kanda becoming the first Kyodan headquarters. NAKAJIMA Masaaki, now National Christian Council of Japan General Secretary, remembers that when he was a boy, while his father was serving a church in the Philippines, he studied Sunday School lessons prepared and sent out to Manila by Miss Yoshioka.



During her long career Yoshioka Harue edited Kyoshi no Tomo (The Church School Teacher's Friend) and The Kyodan Times, the Kyodan's news publication. She also did historical research and worked for the Kyodan Hymnal Committee. Whatever the post she has been a warm, vibrant team member who has graciously brought a spiritual dimension to her administrative tasks and relationships.

A member of Nishikatamachi Church, Harue was notably warm in her support of its pastor, the late SUZUKI Masahisa, while he was Kyodan moderator. Her father, who cele-

brated his 100th birthday this April, feels especially indebted to Rev. Suzuki for helping him recover his faith in Christ. Baptized as a middle school boy in 1894, he had come under the influence of Unitarianism while a law student at Tokyo Imperial University.

Harue's mother, an orphan, was brought up by a Christian uncle. Baptized in Aomori Methodist Church and trained at the Seikei Bible Training School in Yokohama, she was assisting in Itsutsubashi Church, Sendai, when she met her future husband. In 1917 the family moved to Tokyo and Mr. Yoshioka opened his law practice. Nishikatamachi Church, where Harue was baptized, became their church home and gave them support as a Christian family.

Such was the background of the young Harue who started commuting to Kanda to work for the Sunday School Association in 1935.

Those early years in the Kanda building include vivid wartime experiences. She recalls her desperate frustration as she watched helplessly while metal collectors carried off the building's front doors and radiators to be melted down for war material. As the war progressed she found herself, despite her youth, becoming the building caretaker, collecting rents, reading meters, and paying bills, hard put to keep things going. Once she was interrogated for 3 days by the special police as they searched the ledgers for financial grounds for prosecution. One deeply etched memory is of the Kyodan office workers lined up formally to send TOMITA Mitsuru, Kyodan Director, on his controversial visit to the Ise Shrine.

Freed now from daily office work, Miss Yoshioka has focussed attention on the local neighborhood in Urawa where she and a sister care for their father in the family home. Trying to show their appreciation for many years of neglect of their community responsibilities, the sisters are turning their efforts toward improving the quality of neighborhood life. Using part of the house for reading-room, community center, and shop for the sale of handwork, Yoshioka Harue is moving, with enthusiasm and graciousness undiminished, into a new career of service.